

TAPPING TOMORROW'S *potential* TODAY

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LOCATED on the shores of Lake Hume in northeast Victoria, Tallangatta was in dire need of revitalisation. The town was established in the 1870s as a railway gateway, and in the 1950s it was forced to shift eight kilometres to the west to accommodate the expansion of Lake Hume. The town's infrastructure had not been updated since and the population was in decline.

In 2011, the Towong Shire Council took action. They decided to take a fresh look at the entire town and appointed ClarkeHopkinsClarke to develop a realistic and achievable revitalisation plan.

Towong Shire Council CEO Juliana Phelps said: "Our brief for Tallangatta made it clear that the master-plan must generate a series of realistic and practical projects that can be implemented in a five-year timeframe."

Early on, ClarkeHopkinsClarke, together with urban designer Ben Shoo, developed a communications strategy that would generate a high level of engagement. It was acknowledged that a meaningful dialogue with the local community would be key to the success of the revitalisation plan. The first step began with a brand name - Tallangatta Tomorrow - underpinned by a public consultation campaign comprising three stages: 'What's the big idea?', 'Here's a plan...' and 'Let's make it happen!'

All three stages included a variety of opportunities for the public to 'have their say'. Various communication channels were utilised including the establishment of a community workshop and exhibition space within a vacant shop on the main street, which encouraged interest and feedback with passers-by as well as providing a neutral venue for formal workshop sessions. In addition written surveys, a dedicated website, newsletters, posters and signage, as well as outreach consultation sessions with the local school and various clubs, broadened the campaign's reach.

As a result, more than 450 "big ideas" were generated in the first phase of consultation. From this point a master-plan was formulated that directly reflected the community's concerns. The plan identified 66 projects and initiatives of varying scale in the areas of:

1. Housing
2. Tourism
3. Streets and public open space
4. Lake Hume and the foreshore reserve
5. And community facilities and services

The plan was then communicated back to the local community and further consultation entered into as part of the 'Here's a plan...' phase. This process culminated in Towong Shire incorporating the key principles of the finalised plan into the local planning scheme.

For the final 'Let's make it happen!' phase, we ensured that the community got a sense of immediate progress by working with Towong Shire Council to deliver one of the projects identified in the prior stages, which addressed the town's goal to attract a greater level of tourism. The Sandy Creek Bridge project completed the missing link in the High Country

Rail Trail connecting Tallangatta with Albury-Wodonga. The trail is extremely popular with holiday cyclists and locals alike, allowing Tallangatta to tap into this market. The bridge commenced construction during the final stages of the 'Here's a plan...' phase.

ClarkeHopkinsClarke also provided detailed design concepts for the larger projects as part of the revitalisation plan. These projects were documented to meet the Department of Planning and Community Development's Regional Growth Fund submission requirements. This ensured that each proposed project was 'shovel-ready', enabling the Towong Shire Council to submit convincing funding applications with minimal time and effort.

As a result, funding for vital community infrastructure has been received from a variety of sources, including the Rowen Park Sporting Pavilion which is currently under construction and the Tallangatta EcoEducation and Integrated Services Hub, which received funding during March this year.

Overall, the three stage consultation process ensured the community felt that they owned the vision. This lifted the project from the community believing that 'nothing ever changes' to providing something they were engaged in and could work together as a community to actually see happen.

Ms Phelps said: "The Tallangatta Tomorrow Revitalisation Plan is focused on delivering infrastructure to support young families and stimulate economic growth.

ClarkeHopkinsClarke really listened and identified projects that were a true reflection of the community's needs and potential."

